

Deposition of:

Able Non-Emergency Medical Transport Service, LLC

October 28, 2021

In the Matter of:

Alabama Public Service Commission / IN RE:

Veritext Legal Solutions

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1	ALABAMA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
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3	IN THE MATTER OF:
4	ABLE NON-EMERGENCY MEDICAL
	TRANSPORT SERVICE, LLC
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	DOCKET NO. 33164
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	Application to extend existing operation for
7	Able Non-Emergency Medical Transport Service.
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	* * * * * * * * *
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L1	
L2	TESTIMONY AND PROCEEDINGS, taken before
L3	Administrative Law Judge Sue Ellen Young, and
L 4	reported by Haley Tunnell, Certified Court
L5	Reporter and Commissioner for the State of
L6	Alabama at Large, at Carl L. Evans Chief
L7	Administrative Law Judge Hearing Complex, RSA
L8	Union Building, 100 North Union Street, Room
L9	900, Montgomery Alabama, on October 28, 2021, at
20	approximately 9:20 a.m.
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22	* * * * * * * * *
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1	APPEARANCES		
2	FOR THE APPLICANT:		
3	Mr. Herbert Barber, Jr.		
4	574 Golson Road East		
5	Fort Deposit, Alabama 36032		
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8	* * * * * * * * * *		
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1 ALJ YOUNG: For the record, today 2. is October 28th, 2021. We are here for 3 Docket 33164. This hearing is scheduled for 4 9:00 a.m. It is now 9:20. This is an 5 application to extend an existing operation 6 under Motor Carrier Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity 4125 and P651 as a common and contract carrier in intrastate 8 9 commerce over irregular routes in the 10 transportation of passengers and their 11 baggage between all points in the state of 12 Alabama. The applicant currently holds 13 Certificate 4125 and P651, which authorizes 14 the transportation of passengers among and 15 between the counties of Butler, Dallas, 16 Lowndes, Montgomery, and Crenshaw Counties, 17 Alabama. 18 The date this application was 19

The date this application was filed was on or about October 5, 2021, and the date the notice of hearing was served was on or about October 6, 2021. My records indicate that an intervention has been filed in this matter on behalf of M&M Mobility,

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Inc., of Montgomery, Alabama, DBA Caravan Transport. At the present time, let the record reflect that the intervenor, M&M Mobility, Inc., has not appeared at the hearing.

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So to begin with we will take appearances. I need to know who is appearing on behalf of the applicant, and I need your name, your position, and your business address, please. And you can take your mask off if you choose. It's up to you.

MR. BARBER: My name is Herbert

Lamar Barber, Jr. I'm the Vice President of
the Able Home Care and Non-Emergency Medical

Transport Services located at 574 Golson Road

East, Fort Deposit is the primary address.

My secondary address is 4200 Carmichael Court

North, which is in Montgomery, Alabama 36106.

ALJ YOUNG: All right. Are there any further appearances?

MR. BARBER: I have a witness on my behalf.

23 ALJ YOUNG: All right. If you can

talk about your background, your experience in the industry, what services you seek to provide. You have the burden of showing that you are fit, willing, and able to perform the services that you are asking for or that you propose and that it is in the public convenience and necessity that these services are added, and with the contract that it is not detrimental to the public; basically, that is to existing services. So I need you to speak to both the contract and the common carrier authority because they are separate.

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MR. BARBER: This is my statement in support of my application to include it is my intention to provide nonemergency medical transportation to the counties that I have received authority to operate in as of the 15th day of September 2021 granted through the Alabama Public Service Commission. The manner in which I will be providing this service or these services is by transporting individuals from their place of residence and/or facilities to other community-based

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facilities such as clinics, doctor's offices, hospitals, nursing homes, and other destinations deemed necessary for individuals who cannot drive their own personal vehicles or whose overall health puts them at risk for serious illness, injury leading to and including death. The wheelchair van will be my primary transportation. My qualifications as a veteran registered nurse of over 25 years clinical experience makes me uniquely qualified to provide these services.

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The manner in which I determine the need for this service was performed by interviewing health care organizations within the river region and surrounding counties as well as community interaction with private citizens that needed the services as well.

At this time, we are in the process of training three other drivers by one-on-one observations, literate study, and hands-on evaluation of tenants or regulations necessary to provide the service in a safe and efficient manner.

We have obtained and currently hold insurance with National Fire and Marine Insurance Company.

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At this time, I am not aware of any significant citations or violations of the road on a local, state, or federal level.

Finally, I have read and understand the rules and regulations and subsequent documents linked with the safe practice of non-emergency transportation services that the Commission adopts.

In reference to the letters, as to the intent to protest Docket 33164(y) made by M&M Mobility, who has such authority

Certificate 4058 and can accommodate any trips from Montgomery where Able is based to all points in the state. They have stated the addition to competition will be detrimental to their operation. I have with me individuals -- an individual who is willing to stipulate that the services that Able will render on a statewide basis would not be detrimental to their business, but

will, in fact, create an opportunity to allow individuals the freedom to chose who or what entity provides them this most necessary service.

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The services that we are providing are essential to both the 911 service providers and the members of the community. There is no way one company can serve the entire state. I feel that all companies that are opening are vital. Hospital discharges wait times are ridiculous. Over 65 percent of all dialysis patients rely solely on non-emergency medical transport providers to get them to and from these lifesaving treatments. non-emergency Medical Transportation is providing services that will help elevate conditions under 911 respondents and patients who are in need of vital transport. The more non-emergency medical transport providers there are the better. We are also creating jobs here for local individuals. That's the end of my statement.

1 ALJ YOUNG: All right. Let me ask 2 you just a few questions. 3 So part of what you are asking 4 for is contract carrier service; what kind of 5 contracts? 6 MR. BARBER: I am beginning negotiations with several entities here in 8 the state. Majority are based right here in 9 Montgomery, and they have offices in 10 Birmingham and also in Alexander City, you 11 know, throughout the state. So what I'm 12 trying to do is set up the opportunity where 13 I can transport their patients from one 14 hospital to another hospital if necessary 15 from Montgomery to Birmingham, from 16 Montgomery to Talladega, from Montgomery to 17 Huntsville, if necessary, from Montgomery to 18 Auburn, all the points in the state, and I

ALJ YOUNG: But what entity -- what type of entity are you talking about

have been speaking to them, but I cannot

operate until I get ready through you all in

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order to --

1 contracting with? Is it a --

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MR. BARBER: It's a home health agency and a rehabilitation hospital and also --

ALJ YOUNG: Doctor offices?

MR. BARBER: Doctor offices have also expressed their need for that service, and then I also had close communications with some home health and hospices in different areas of the state.

ALJ YOUNG: What about like insurance -- some of the brokers, Access2Care, LogistiCare that broker out transportation services for insurance providers?

MR. BARBER: Now, at this point, we have made application with the CAQH, which is insurance companies that offer their private citizens opportunity to use our services on private basis through their healthcare insurance. We've also made application with Medicare Part B that will allow us to operate and participate in the Medicare system in

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1	order to bring the services to those
2	individuals that I have stipulated in my
3	contract in my statement that rely on
4	non-emergency medical transport services for
5	dialysis treatment. So we've made
6	application to all of these entities, but in
7	order for us to be able to provide those
8	services we have to have authority through
9	you all.
10	ALJ YOUNG: Certainly. I'm just
11	trying to get information to distinguish
12	between the authority you seek as a common
13	carrier and the authority you seek as a
14	contract carrier.
15	MR. BARBER: Right.
16	ALJ YOUNG: Because you have both of
17	those, so you have to cover both of those.
18	MR. BARBER: Yes.
19	ALJ YOUNG: What would your hours of

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operation be?

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MR. BARBER: The hours of operation

as currently stipulated will be from 7:00 in

the morning to 10:00 or 11:00 at night

depending upon the need.

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ALJ YOUNG: All right. And what would be your lead time -- how much notice do you need before someone makes a reservation?

MR. BARBER: Well, we're asking for a minimum of 24 hours, but if it's an emergency situation, we will ask for at least six hours notice before we can, you know, evaluate our scheduling because we don't want to overbook ourselves.

ALJ YOUNG: And so when you -- how many total vehicles are you proposing?

MR. BARBER: Right now I have two vehicles with a third one on the way. It's going to allow us to provide a greater expanded service because most of the people that I have come in contact with are bariatric in nature and they can only be transported, you know, with an ambulance. Well, we have an option that's going to be, you know, better than them having to spend \$745 to go to wherever they need to go on an ambulance. What we're proposing is I have

bought a van that will allow for a gurney to 1 2. be locked into place and to provide those 3 services to elevate the 911 calls because, 4 you know, Care and Haynes cannot properly --5 you know, they're behind. They got 911 calls, then they have transfers to and from 6 the facilities. So my idea is to have a wheelchair accessible vehicle that will 8 accommodate wheelchairs and also gurneys --9 10 stretchers is the common term to where we can 11 get them inside the vehicle and transport 12 them. Now, it's only one stretcher that will 13 fit inside this van, but there is a locking 14 system that will keep them safe during the 15 transfer.

ALJ YOUNG: Do you intend on providing transportation for emergency patients?

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MR. BARBER: Now, at this point, we are not entertaining that notion because we will have to have certification through a different entity.

23 ALJ YOUNG: Yeah. That's what I

1 wanted to make sure.

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MR. BARBER: No, we're not going to do that. We're going to stick with the non-emergency medical transport. We're not doing emergency.

ALJ YOUNG: Would you say like nursing homes and places like that would be your --

MR. BARBER: Yes.

ALJ YOUNG: So at the present time you have Butler, Dallas, Lowndes, Montgomery, and Crenshaw Counties, and you're adding the rest of the state. So what has led you to the belief that there is a need for additional service in the whole state of Alabama?

MR. BARBER: Because I have received phone calls from many of my practitioner friends saying that there is a need in Autauga, Elmore, over in Tuskegee, down in Auburn, over in Opelika. You know, being a registered nurse we have a network that we operate in, and they have been telling me

that there is a great need for my services in 1 2. all of these areas, but I have to be 3 proactive and not just apply for one county 4 at the time. So my intention is to apply for the entire state so that the opportunity will 5 6 be available to us to grow into the state, you know, and provide these services. 8 also have opportunity to hire people in those 9 localities as well to provide the services. So we're not just -- we're going to be housed 10 and based pretty much in Fort Deposit. It's 11 going to be where the business is actually 12 13 credentialed out of, but we also have the 14 office in Montgomery, and we're planning on 15 putting offices throughout the state in the 16 north, the east, the south, and the west to 17 be able to prepare ourselves to be able to provide those services to those -- to those 18 19 individuals who need -- because I know for a 20 fact there's a lot of people in these rural 2.1 areas that do not have access to healthcare 22 because they don't have transportation to 23 their doctor's appointments. And from what I

1 can tell, even in my county there is a 2. 45-minute drive to Montgomery if you have an emergency situation or there's a 45 minute 3 4 drive to the nearest hospital. Well, 911 5 cannot sufficiently supply that coverage 6 because there is only a number of ambulance services in each county. And they only have 8 so many ambulances that are actively working. 9 And then they have to take into account a 10 number of social events that they have to be 11 in attendance for. They also have emergency, 12 you know, situations that come up in the 13 county. I was -- I was, you know, less than 14 impressed about four or five years ago a 15 close family friend of ours fell ill, and 16 they had an unknown substance in their 17 Well, guess what, they live on the 18 Butler, Lowndes County line, and they sent an 19 ambulance up, but when they found out that 20 the person did not live on the Butler side of 2.1 the county line, they stopped, turned around, and called an ambulance out of Hayneville, 22 23 which was 40 minutes away from where the

person was located because the county line 1 2. was not in their jurisdiction. And I was 3 doing CPR for close to 45 minutes on this 4 young man who subsequently died for lack of 5 care and no one was able to come properly 6 assess this young man to where he could -his life could have been saved, and he could 8 have went to a hospital and would have been 9 living today. So I see it everyday in my 10 nursing career. People have this 11 overwhelming need for services and 12 opportunity to save their own lives.

ALJ YOUNG: Okay.

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MR. BARBER: If you call 911 you expect somebody to answer; right? Well, guess what, 911 can't -- is not able -- especially with this pandemic.

ALJ YOUNG: But you're not going to provide 911 emergency services?

MR. BARBER: No. But what I'm saying is for individuals who have that need, if someone just needs a ride to the doctor's appointment, they don't have to consider that

individual as part of their -- part of their rotation. Now they can focus on the 911 calls, and we can transfer the transportation to and from their doctor's office.

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ALJ YOUNG: Let me ask you about this. So if you had a call for someone at the nursing home, so it's a -- that wants to go to the beauty parlor, so is that a non-emergency medical transportation?

MR. BARBER: It is.

ALJ YOUNG: Because of the nature of the patient?

MR. BARBER: That's right.

ALJ YOUNG: That's what I just wanted to -- we don't have any clear definition of that so that's what I wanted.

MR. BARBER: Yeah. I understand.

ALJ YOUNG: Okay. And you've already told us you are familiar and willing to comply with the rules of the commission. So is there anything else you would like to add before we will have the witness.

MR. BARBER: That's all I have to

 $1 \mid say.$

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ALJ YOUNG: All right. If you want to call your witness. If you want to sit just up here. Are you going to ask her questions or are do you want her to just give a narrative?

MR. BARBER: I'm going to ask her a question or two.

ALJ YOUNG: Okay. All right. Well, she can come and sit right here so the court reporter can hear her, and you can ask her questions, and I can see her. And I'll remind you that you have already been previously sworn in. If you'll just state your name again and where you work -- your connections here and then --

THE WITNESS: Okay. Good morning.

First of all, my name is Bertha Crowell. I

am a client of Mr. Lamar -- my husband. I

was referred to him a few months ago. My -
just to give you a little background my

husband was involved in a serious car

accident at the end of March and had to be

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1 transported to UAB Hospital for several 2. surgeries. He's in the recovery phase now. 3 It's a long process, but he's recovering now, 4 and we rely on Mr. Lamar to get us back and 5 forth to UAB each month. He has monthly 6 appointments with the trauma team and the infectious disease doctors. Those are two 8 separate appointments. Prior to learning 9 about Mr. Lamar, we had to utilize, because my husband's injuries, ambulance services and 10 11 because it was a non-emergency request it was 12 very expensive, very expensive, and we didn't 13 have it and we still don't have it. And he 14 has actually saved us because my husband 15 would not be able to even attend his monthly 16 appointments had we not been referred to 17 Mr. Lamar, and we're so appreciative and 18 grateful for that. And also he transports my 19 husband back and forth to his doctor's appointments, and we have a -- my husband has 2.0 2.1 to get his second -- well, he has to start 22 over with his vaccines because he only had 23 one prior to the accident, so Mr. Lamar will

- also transport him to Walgreen's to get his second vaccine. So we are relying on him
- quite a bit right now; if not, I'm not for
- 4 sure how we will make that work, to be honest
- 5 with you.
- 6 ALJ YOUNG: You got some questions
- 7 for her?
- 8 BERTHA CROWELL,
- 9 having previously been sworn, testified
- 10 as follows:
- 11 EXAMINATION
- 12 BY MR. BERNARD:
- Q. So with my services -- would you say my
- 14 services are efficient and economical?
- 15 A. Yes.
- 16 | Q. It's not an undue burden on his pocket?
- 17 A. \$4,000 from Montgomery to Birmingham in
- 18 comparison to 300 is a big difference, and right
- 19 now something that we will gladly pay, to be
- 20 honest.
- 21 Q. Now, with that being said, do you think
- 22 that my service is to where we are able to meet
- 23 your need in a timely and efficient manner and

Page 23

- 1 get you to and from you appointments on time
- 2 | without any delays?
- 3 A. Right. We have not had any problems at
- 4 | all, and I appreciate and was a little shocked
- 5 that he only required a 24-hour notice even
- 6 | though -- you know, he already has my husband's
- 7 November 8th appointment. But just -- that
- 8 takes a lot of stress off of a caregiver.
- 9 That's one less thing we have to think about in
- 10 | caring for -- you know, for me, for my husband,
- 11 | that's one thing that I can just scratch off my
- 12 | list that helps me.
- 13 O. And then last but not least, when we get
- 14 Part C Certification, will our services be
- 15 | necessary to continue to provide the service to
- 16 where you're not out of pocket, you're actually
- 17 using your insurances to provide the service and
- 18 to pay for the service, would that be helpful
- 19 | for your situation?
- 20 A. That would be very helpful for our
- 21 situation.
- 22 Q. Let me ask a question: Has Mr. Barber
- 23 helped you with transportation to -- was it UAB?

- 1 A. Uh-huh.
- 2 Q. All right.
- 3 A. The Kirkland Clinic.
- 4 0. Okay.

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ALJ YOUNG: I'm just asking because
your authority at present time does not allow
you to take someone to UAB to Birmingham.

8 MR. BARBER: Okay.

ALJ YOUNG: So that -- so that's a back to familiarity and willingness to comply with the rules. So until or if such time as you receive this additional authority, would you be -- would you operate within the rules and within --

MR. BARBER: Yes.

16 ALJ YOUNG: -- the territory that
17 you have at this time?

MR. BARBER: Yes.

19 ALJ YOUNG: Okay. All right. Is

20 there anything else you would like to add?

21 THE WITNESS: No, I don't have

22 anything to add.

23 ALJ YOUNG: All right. Anything you

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1	REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE			
2	STATE OF ALABAMA			
	MONTGOMERY COUNTY			
3				
4	I, Haley Tunnell, Court Reporter,			
5	Commissioner for the State of Alabama at Large,			
6	hereby certify that on October 28, 2021, I			
7	reported the testimony and proceedings in the			
8	foregoing cause and that pages 3 through 25			
9	contain a true and accurate transcription of the			
10	proceedings set out herein.			
11	I further certify that I am neither kin nor			
12	counsel to any of the parties to said cause, nor			
13	in any manner interested in the results thereof.			
14	MNUTHENLL			
15	0			
	HALEY TUNNELL, Court Reporter			
16	Commissioner for the			
	State of Alabama at Large			
17	ACCR 639, Expires 09/30/22			
	MY COMMISSION EXPIRES: 02/25/23			
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20				

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